

## Migration at Border: An Anthropological Study on Cross-border Oraons in North 24-Parganas, W.Bengal, India

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### **Abstract**

*For the study we selected seventy Oraon families living in the village Dhuluni of Sadder-Para in north 24 parganas at the cross-border of West Bengal in eastern India. The hamlet Sadder-Para of the village Dhuluni is completely composed with homogenous population of Oraon who practice their traditional way of life even today. They had been living since hundreds of years in this locality. Record depicts, they came from the neighboring country Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) due the Indigo tax. Record further tells, their ancestors were not able to pay the Indigo tax but the Britishers were not agree to release hard taxation on them. So, the Oraons had come in India in search of new jobs with a hope that the moneylenders and Zaminders (landlords) of this locality will help them to combat their crises.*

**Keywords:** History, Migration, Occupation

### **1. Introduction**

For the study we selected seventy Oraon families living in the village Dhuluni of Sadder-Para in north 24 parganas at the cross-border of West Bengal in eastern India. The hamlet Sadder-Para of the village Dhuluni is completely composed with homogenous population of Oraon who practice their traditional way of life even today. They had been living since hundreds of years in this locality. Record depicts, they came from the neighboring country Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) due the Indigo tax. Record further tells, their ancestors were not able to pay the Indigo tax but the Britishers were not agree to release hard taxation on them. So, the Oraons had come in India in search of new jobs with a hope that the moneylenders and *Zaminders* (landlords) of this locality will help them to combat their crises.

There are seventy Oraon families have been studied for the present paper. The study area is located West Bengal and Bangladesh Border site. The Sadder Para (Oraon) of the Village Dhuluni is unit of the present study. The segments or hamlet of the village is completely composed with homogenous population. Only Oraons are living in this area and still now practice their traditional way of life with affluence of modernization. They had been living since hundred years. The people of the study area said that they came from Bangladesh due the Indigo tax. Their ancestors were come for cutting the jungle. The opinions of the villagers that their ancestors were not able to pay the Indigo tax and the British emperors not agree to release hard taxation on them. So they had come and find new jobs by the moneylenders or *Zaminders* in this locality.

### **2. Tradition of Origin**

Riseley wrote: Oraon, Uraon, Kunokh, Kunruk, a Dravidian cultivating tribe of Chotonagpur., classed on linguistic grounds as Dravidian, and supposed to be closely akin to the males of the Rajmahal hills. He pointed "on their traditions" the original home was in the west of India, whence they came to Kaimur hills and Rohtas in Sahabad. He has written that Oraons were derived from the Rohtas by the Muhamadans, the tribe separated into two category or sub-divisions one of

those, under the chief, directed the course of Ganges, and finally settled in Rajmahals hills. Another divisions was led by his younger brother, went up the son into Palamau, and turning eastward along the Koel took possession of the north-western portion of the Chotonagpur. Riseley had written that "some say that they expelled the Mundas from this portion of the country, and forced them to retire to their present settlements in south of Lohardaga; but this settlement is not borne out by local tradition, nor can it be reconciled with the fact that the few Mundas found in the 'Oraon Parganas' on the plateau are acknowledged and locked up to as descents of the founders of the villages in which they live.

### 3. History of Migration

The Oraons is a settled agricultural tribe. Presently they are distributed over the large extent of Eastern part of India as well as Bangladesh. Racially they belong to the Dravidian stock of Southern India in the context of their tradition. It is believed that their ancestors had migrated from the Konkan in the west coast to Northern India. Afterwards they permanently used to live at Chotonagpur plateau in Bihar. It was assumed that during colonial period they have driven by some Moneylenders, Zaminders & Labor contractors. Many other reasons have driven a large number of the Oraons to districts of Bihar, West Bengal, and Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, a few anthropological researches have been switched over in different times by foreign scholars. But accidentally there is no record of anthropological study on tribal people which have been completed by native scholars excepting Abdus Sattar, s (1971) work. At present two Bangladesh scholars are working on Tribal people on Paharia of Rajshahi and Khasia of Sylhet district. E.T. Dalton (1872) in his study *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* covered the selected tribes and castes of Bengal (Now Bangladesh). The first tribal study related monograph was first published by *Asiatic Society of Pakistan in*. Pierre Bessaignet (1960) in his investigation *Tribes of northern Border of East Pakistan* is consisted with the general picture of Tribes of six and Dinajpur on the hand: Maymensingh and Sylhet on the other. Districts of East Pakistan Rajshahi, Bogra, Rangpur,

According to Sarkar & Ghosh the early history of Bangladesh is obscure. They believed that, around 1000 B.C. the band tribe an offshoot of Dravidian was pushed out of the upper Ganges valley by the Indo-Aryans and the territory thus populated by the band came to be known as Bangla, during third century B.C. The *Murya Empire* occupied the territory and encouraged the propagation of Buddhism under the rule of *emperor Ashoka* later on it came under the control of *Gupta Empire*. During 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D *Pala dynasty* came into power before it was taken by the Muslim ruler. It became part of British rule till 1947, when the territory was annexed to Pakistan and came to be known as East Pakistan. Subsequently, the land got independence 1971, became 'Bangladesh'.

Kuthleen kuiper said that the Oraons are aboriginal people of the Chotonagpur Plateau. They call themselves Kurukh and speak Dravidian languages akin and other speak Dravidian tribal language of central India. They also speak language belonging to Indo- Aryan branch of the Indo -European family and are also called Parbates, Khasa or Chetri. The people historically ancient, having being mentioned by the authors Pily and Herodotus and figuring the Indian Epics poem Mahabharata.

An important historical background is explained in search of Oraons immigration in Bangladesh. Rajshahi was formed by the old kingdom of *Pundra*, the country of the Pods, the capital was *Mahasthan*. Under the Sen Kings this was known as *Barendra Bhumi*, which currently survives in the *Barind tract* already referred to Rajshahi presents an example of the process by which a native *Zaminderi* had been molded into British district. In 1728 the *Zamindari* of Rajshahi of the *Nator* family extended from Bhagalpur on west to Dacca on the east and included a large subdivision called *Nij Chakla*, Rajshahi, on the south bank of the *Padma river*, which stretched across the Murshidabad and Nadia as far as the frontiers of Bribhum and Bardhaman. There has been an extension of immigration to the *Barind* on the Part of aboriginal Santals, Mundas and Oraons who were engaged to cut down and clear the Jungle by the Zaminders. They had allowed to occupied waste land rent free for three or four years; and they had been moved on living.

In the opinion of Arya & Roy, it is known that the tribal migration had started torrentially during colonial period. Cuthbert focused the regular seasonal migration during the winters of *Dhangars* (hill coolies) of Chotonagpur with some of the family members, to Bengal districts as early as 1827. They were employed in Indigo factories and controversy work in Calcutta. An another report have described by Bose that " Oraons, one of the indigenous peoples of India originally lived on the west cost of India whence their ancestors had came up the Narbada valley and settled in the Kaimur hills of the Rohtas plateau in the present Shahabad district of Bihar. They were driven out from there by a Dowerful foe in the fifth century B.C. One branch retreated followed the course of the Ganges and settled in the Rajmahal hills and are known as *Malers*. Their setting in diverse places has not created any serious or major differences in their way of life, socio-cultural and religious beliefs, customs or traditions.

According to Dalton, Oraons gradually migrated from the western coast of India. He preferred Gujrat as the starting point. His explanation was that Oraons have a tradition when driven from Rohtas, they divided into two categories. One of the chief went towards Ganges and other of younger brother went south east\* (p-250,251). Roy & Dalton remarks that the Oraons of Chotonagpur and the Malar of the Rajmahal hills are the two division of a single tribe. Because their traditions as well as social-cultural and philosophical evidences show same attributes.

During the 1820s and 1830s, people for the overseas destinations were recruited mainly from Chotonagpur Plateau, the "aboriginal "borderland of Bengal. The *Dhangars*, means "Hill People" exhibits Santal, Munda & Oraon had come as for Indigo labor. (Haan)

The Oraons, a Dravidian speaking people, is believed to have migrated from southern India and settled Chotonagpur Plateau (Dalton, 1872, Hunter, 1877; Risley, 1891, Roy 1915) many centuries ago. In Assam they identified themselves as *Urang*. The major concentration is in Ranchi district of Bihar however they are also found in W.B, Orissa. The Hindu Oraons have been reported to avoid matrimonial alliances with the christen counterpart.

Minaham is of opinion: Oraons tradition claims the Oraons were driven out of their ancient *kingdom of Rohtas*, believed to be in the Konkan region of Maharashtra in western India. Over-population and attacks by invading peoples forced the Oraons to migrate north through the river valleys until they finally settled around Shahabad in Bihar. Successive borders of invading peoples forced the oraons to shelter on the Rohtas plateau. There they formed a powerful kingdom that was defeated by the Kuru Kingdom. Driven from the Rohtas region by invading Chereos, the Oraons divided by the two groups of refugees, one group known as Male, followed a chief north word through the valley of Ganges River to eventually settle in the Rajmahal hills. The other groups also fled the invasion but turned South to settle in the Chotonagpur plateau region among the peoples of the Munda tribe probably in the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

The following statement shows the number and distribution of Oraons in 1872 and 1881:

District	1872	1881	district	1872	1881
Bardwan	991	2413	Chitagong	1	43
Bankura	105	76	Noakhali	6	25
Birbhum	5159	5567	Khulna	.....	14
Midnapur	528	83	Nadia	265	633
Hughli	626	240	Jessore	02	133
Howrah		19			
24 Parganas	3362	1439			

**Source:** Risley, H.H, 1891, " Tribes and Castes of Bengal. Vol. II, Calcutta, P- 150)

#### 4. Objective of the Study

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another by usually crossing the political boundary to overcome either their crisis of residency or economic pursuits. On the basis of migrants such intension the migration event may be of different types like as follows : a) Internal b) external c) Immigration d) Emigration e) Population transfer f) impelled g) Step & Chain h) Return and i) Seasonal.

Main purpose of the study is to investigate such migration event of the cross-border Oraons in eastern India and to trace out how many years they have been living in the area. But no authentic historical record of their migration events especially from Borogarm of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) is found. However, it is said the people of the cross-border Oraons were migrated from Chotonagpur (India) to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) during colonial Rule approximately around 18<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter they came in North 24-parganas of West Bengal (India). The present paper mainly attempts to study the cross-border migration event along with their occupation pattern in relation to past.

#### 5. Methodology and Techniques Used

According to Millar the goal of fieldwork is to collect information, or data, about, the research topics. In cultural Anthropology, variations exist about what kind of data to emphasize and the best ways to collect data. (p-68, Ed-6<sup>th</sup>). In the opinion of Millar, a research method is regulated with a research question or hypothesis, gathering data for constructing to the question, and then assessing the findings in relation to the original hypothesis. When a research approach is not followed by the hypothesis, it involves gathering data through unstructured data, informal observation, conversation and other methods. For the present theoretical research can be tested by the several techniques.

## 6. Interview

The famous scientist H. Russel Bernard said in his book entitled "Research Methods in Anthropology" that the concept of interview has been covered a lot of platforms, from totally unstructured interactions with, through semi structured conditions, to highly formal interactions with respondents. Interviewing is done on the cell phone or phone, in person by mail-even by computer. Unstructured interviewing employs on all situation of time and just anywhere –in homes, while walking. At the same time semi structured interviewing or in-depth interviewing is scheduled activity. (P-210). According to Kothari the interview method of collecting data involves presents of oral – stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses. Persona interview method requires a person as the interviewer asking questions generally face to face contact to other person.

## 7. Questionnaire

It is a formal research tool which containing a pre-planned series of questions that the researcher ask in a face –to-face setting or mail or e-mail.(Barbara miller,p-69). P.V. Young had been introduced a vast variety of questionnaires may be classified in various dimensions. Structured questionnaire is composed with pose definite, concrete, and preordained questions, that is, they are prepared in advance and not constructed on the spot during the questioning period. Additional questions may be used when it is needed in the discipline of research strategies. In the form of structured questionnaire are spread in wider area. According to Kothari (2010), the form of question may be either closed or open be stated in advance and not constructed. (p-101).

## 8. Genealogical Method

People wish to know about our family history by tracing genealogies. Kottak delineated that the genealogical method is a solid well established ethnographic technique. W. H. R. Rivers, who has been called 'the founder of the modern study of social organization', exerted an immense influence on his contemporaries and successors. This volume reprints three of his lectures, delivered in 1913 and first published in 1914, which provide a short and brilliant exposition of his theoretical approach, and are exemplary of his handling of ethnographic evidence. His theme is the relationship between kinship terminologies and social organization, more particularly forms of marriage, a subject still of lively theoretical interest. Also included is the same author's The Genealogical Method of Anthropological Enquiry, first published in 1910, a classic of anthropological methodology, and Professor Raymond Firth of the London School of Economics and Professor David Schneider of the University of Chicago provide commentaries estimating the past and present importance of Rivers in British and American Anthropology respectively.

## 9. Study Area

The village is situated under the Thana Bangaon (20 km from Bangaon Railway Station), Block- Bagdha, Dist- North 24 Parganas. The empirical data of the studied people on migration is much similar as well as to Migration theory. The political address of the study area is mentioned with the following table

**Fig. 1:** Area of Study

District	North 24 Parganas
Mouza	Dhalani
Thana (Police Station)	Bagdha
Panchayet	Koniara
Village	Dhalani
Hamlet or Para	Sardar
J.L No	91
Tribe	Oraon

\*Village: Dhalani\*

The population of panchayet Koniara-I, inhabits –a) No of Total population =21183, b) NO of Total Household= 4990, c) Total Male= 10946. d) No of Total Female=10237

Panchayet Koniara: the following table has been represented the present demography of the panchayet Koniara-1

**Fig. 2:** Population

Subject	Individuals/ H.H
No of Household	4990
Population	21183
Total Male	10946
Total Female	10237
S/C Male	5251
S/C Female	4872
ST Male	545
ST Female	519

**Source:** Fig 1 & 2 ( data has been collected from Koniara panchyet office)\*\*

Cultivated Area: It has been found that 418.02 acre land is used for Cultivation purpose, 4.37 acre is water body area and 0.17 is vested land. Mainly paddy cultivation is a major function in the village. Thus the most of the villagers are related to the paddy cultivation work. In this connection the major portion of the agricultural labors are Oraon.

Family Distribution : The data has been collected through household survey .

**Table 1:** Family fistribution-01

Nature of the family	NO	%
Small (1-4)	57	81.15
Medium (+4-7)	11	15.95
Large (7)	02	2.9
Total	70	100

At present 69 families has been studied. 81.15% small sizes are found out of 69 families. It is highest in number. Medium and large families are 15.95% and 2.9 % respectively.

Clanwise family distribution.

**Table 2:** Clan and family distribution

SL No	Clan	No of Family	%
01	Tiriki	33	47.14
02	Toppo	29	41.42
03	Panna	01	1.43
04	Kerketa	01	1.43
05	Dhanua	01	1.43
06	Miz	03	4.29
07	Khalko	01	1.43
08	Lakra	01	1.43
Total		70	100

In this village there are eight clans have been found. They are namely as Tirki, Toppo, Panna, kerketa,Dhanua, miz, khalko and lakra. The village is highly concentrated with 47.14% Tirki clan members and very rare of 1.43% Panna,kerketa,Dhanua,Khalko and Lakra.

Clan and sex wise Population Distribution.

**T able 3:** Clan and sex wise population

SI No	Clan Name	Male	Female	Total
01	Tirki	78	54	132
02	Toppo	63	52	115
03	Miz	06	06	12
04	Khalko	-	04	04

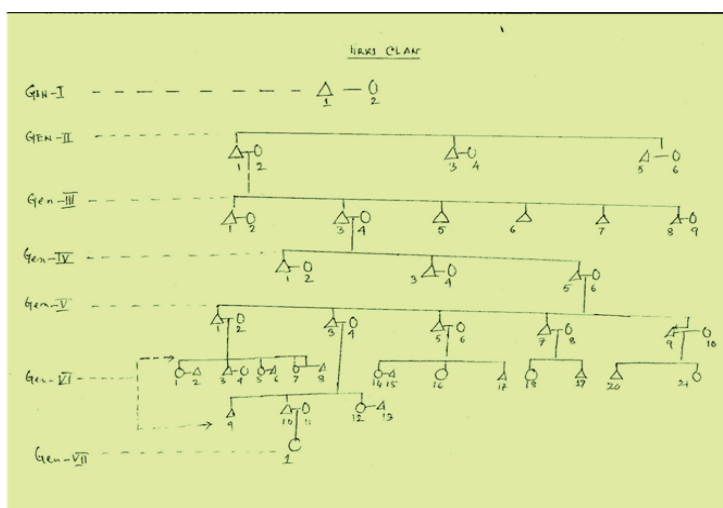
05	Panna	01	02	03
06	Kerketa	02	02	04
07	Dhanua	04	01	05
08	Lakrar	04	03	07
Total	08	158	124	282

Table.1,2,3..Data have been investigated under the anthropological Technique from the study)

## 10. Genealogy

To take genealogy we have take in the sense that fro ancestor to present condition in the sense that from when the the family were to came in this hamlet for time detection. Because to reconstruct time situatio

Fig. I: Tirki Clan mrmbers.



- Generation-I, Individual no 1 & 2 is apical cap of the genealogy. They had been came to Bangladesh form Chotonagpur plateau by the force of British Governess as low wages labors for Indigo cultivation.
- Probably members of generation -1 , had been came before 1870 .
- Members of 3nd generation and their children had been came to Dhalani Village under the pressure of hard Indigo-taxation
- Gen-V, 3 is ego, he came to village with his father's fathers (F-F). So ego's father, grand fathers and fathers brothers (FBr) also migrated from Bangladesh to West Bengal .
- Generation-III, all members had been migrated to studied place from bangladesh.
- Generation-IV to Latest generations are permanently living here .

The following chart describes the nature of migration history of the genealogy.

Gen	Individual No	Migrated from	Emigrated in/Temporary Resident	Probably time
I	1,2	Chotonagpur	Bangladesh	Before 1860
II	1,2,3,4,5,6		Bangladesh	
III	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	Bangladesh	West Bengal	after 1882
IV	All		West Bengal	Present& Permanent
V	All		West bengal	Resident
VI	All		West Bengal	
VII.	All		West Bengal	

**Source:** For Interview and questionnaire treatment stimuli by the selected study.

### Causes of migration

- A. In the opinion of the Village people -----they had been come from Bangladesh by the pressure of high indigo-tax. The British emperor had not been agreed to relax their taxation.
- B. They probably migrated here for cutting jungle under the moneylenders or zaminders to make new habitation and metal road construction. The connecting road is Baongaon – Bagdha, Bangaon-Boyra, Bangaon-Bayara etc.
- C. Several studies show that they migrated as daily labour for doing Railway line construction work etc.

## 11. Result

As to result of the Present study indicates that migration was caused by Push and pull factor. Because they migrated by several types of push and pull factors may influence people in their movement

1. Environmental (e.g., climate, natural disasters) 2. Political (e.g., war) 3. Economic (e.g., work) 4. Cultural (e.g., religious freedom, education). The long oraon migration supported the theory of Step Migration and also Internal Migration.

## 12. Conclusion

An elegant work has been done by Elefenbein in 1987, is called Biochi's hypothesis. According to this research Brahui tribes were migrated from Baluchistan, area of Indus valley in different directions. The tribes which spoke Brahui, divided into three as they moved south-east from the Baluchistan province of Pakistan, in older times. The forth one went to the Sindh province in Pakistan. One of them were going South-east, split into two at Rohtasgarh in the present state of Bihar. After splitting, one went to Rajmahal hills near Santal Pargana and settled there, and the other went to Chotonagpur. These were the Kurukh (Oraon) speaking tribes.

In relation to Oraon migration history, several studies shows that the Oraons to migrate north through the river valley until they finally settled around Shahabad in Bihar. Dalton explained they migrated from the western coast of India. He preferred Gujrat as the starting point. His explanation was in Rohtas, they divided into two categories. One of the chief went towards Ganges and other of younger brother went south east. Some scholars believed that the Dravidian stalk of Oraons basically had come from Konkan in the west coast to Northern India on the basis of their tradition. On the basis of several scientific investigation of Oraon migration history it is reconstructed that from the Baluchistan to Indus valley the ancestors of oraons had came for searching a permanent resident. Then they may be scattered elsewhere, one of branch might have been went towards Southern India as mentioned by the scholars like Konkan west cost. Afterward they wished to migrate north and finally settled around Shahabad in Bihar. At this moment they were forced to move a new shelter by pressure of invading borders people to Rohtas. In this place they formed a powerful kingdom that was defeated by the Kuru Kingdom. Driven from the Rohtas region by invading Chereos, the Oraons divided by the two groups of refugees, one group known as Male, followed a chief to the north direction through the valley of Ganges River and eventually settled in the Rajmahal hills. And others group went to Chotonagpur Plateau. During 1800s they were employed in Indigo factories, employed as a labour of various constructing work. During 1860s some Oraon families most probably migrated to Jassor of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) as employees of Railway construction workers.

The Oraons of Dhalani Village probably migrated first from Chotonagpur and to Bangladesh and then Dhalani, North 24 parganas, West Bengal, India. In this long journey of migration, the studied people had been passed Chotonagpur to Bengal or East Bengal to East Pakistan and then Modern India under the district of North 24 parganas in West Bengal. If we consider to the traditional migration which was extremely studied by the scholars in case of Dhalani., We may focus a migration canvas that indicates us the ancestors of the particular people started their journey from Baluchistan to Bangladesh and presently West Bengal. In this canvas they fight against several wars to search better living equipments, horrible pressure of British emperors and occupation. But they do not lose their own cultural identity; they always had been maintaining their own cultural system and purity.

## 13. Research Significance

The present study exerts two relevant issues. One is traditional migration and other is temporary migration. Traditional migration history always reconstructs the internal homogenous cultural identity. Temporary migration sometimes externally changes the life of indigenous people activities. It has been found that ancestors of the Oraons of the study



were employed Indigo labour. When indigo cultivation decreased they again migrated and employed as workers of jungle cutting, railway line constructing labour etc.. Thus Temporary migration basically happened due to economic opportunities as well as pressure of emperor intensity. It may be said that the temporary migration is likely to be recognized as migration of unrest factors. When the unrest factors comes close to their doors, the migration will be stopped. That is why; it may be called temporary migration. This migration shows the remarkable cultural history, theory of civilization and modernization in the life of indigenous people. After stopped the temporary migration the indigenous people will settle their life in different places with small pockets. Their population strength will be low in such pockets. And also they have been practicing their own cultural practices on the basis of their theory of traditional migration.

#### 14. Acknoeldgement

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